



NEWS

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See MCI v. FCC, 515 F 2d 385 (D.C. Circ 1974).

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Report Places Emphasis on Need for Broadband in Rural America

WASHINGTON -- The Department of Agriculture (USDA) today joined the Federal Communication Commission (FCC) in releasing a report to Congress entitled, “[Bringing Broadband to Rural America: Update to Report on a Rural Broadband Strategy](#),” for placing new emphasis on the need to support the delivery of broadband to rural communities.

The report, prepared by the FCC in consultation with USDA’s Rural Utilities Service (RUS), noted that broadband deployment and adoption remains a top priority for the Obama Administration through ongoing loan and grant programs administered by RUS and regulatory reform measures and tools set forth by the FCC. However, more needs to be done to fulfill the Administration’s objective for widespread deployment of affordable, quality broadband services to every community.

“The FCC’s report confirms the need to continue the Administration’s comprehensive investments and policy framework to ensure that rural communities and tribal nations enjoy the same access to the economic, educational, health care and public safety opportunities and services that broadband delivers in urbanized communities,” said RUS Administrator Jonathan Adelstein. “Financing available through a broad range of USDA programs is essential for economic growth, including jobs, in the parts of the country still waiting for the benefits broadband brings.”

“While we have made significant progress, the report shows that approximately 28 percent of rural residents still lack access to the kind of broadband that most Americans take for granted,” said FCC Chairman Julius Genachowski. “That is not acceptable, and it’s why the FCC has launched major initiatives to overhaul our universal service system, free more spectrum, and reduce barriers to broadband deployment. These efforts will help ensure that high-speed Internet can connect rural communities to global markets, jobs, and world-class education and health care.”

The White House earlier this month announced the establishment of a Rural Council to strengthen rural communities and promote economic growth. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack will chair the council, which will promote job creation and economic development by focusing on key factors for growth, including broadband.

RUS, part of the Rural Development mission area, has funded broadband through its Farm Bill loan program since 2002, and broadband capability through its traditional telecommunications

infrastructure program since 1995. Since publication of the FCC's 2009 broadband report, RUS has invested over \$5 billion in funding for broadband, including approximately \$1.5 billion in loans for telecommunications infrastructure that is broadband capable, \$13.4 million in grants for broadband in remote rural areas, \$71 million in distance learning and telemedicine grants, and \$3.5 billion in broadband funding awarded under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.

The FCC released a National Broadband Plan in 2010 providing sweeping recommendations for all of government and the private sector for tackling the great infrastructure challenge of the 21st Century: universal, robust broadband that helps the nation accomplish its key priorities. Since then, the FCC has made significant progress on its broadband agenda.

A 2008 USDA study by the USDA Economic Research Service noted that rural economies benefit from broadband availability. According to the USDA study, "Broadband Internet's Value for Rural America," evidence suggests that the broadband loan program administered by RUS stimulated broadband deployment in rural areas.

Read the FCC's [blog](#) on the Rural Broadband Report, along with a further [statement](#) by Chairman Genachowski. For more information on USDA's broadband loan and grant programs, please visit www.rurdev.usda.gov.